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a stage formed at least at a portion of an external circumference of the optical filter by varying a size of a surface of said first filter layer along a direction perpendicular to the optical axis from a size of a surface of said second filter layer along the direction perpendicular to the optical axis, wherein the portion of the external circumference of the optical filter which forms the stage includes a portion of one of the surfaces of the first and second filter layers that extends in the direction perpendicular to the optical axis.

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7. (Amended) An optical filter according to claim 2, wherein:

said first filter layer is located at a side closer to the subject than said second filter layer; and
a size of the surface of said first filter layer is smaller than a size of the surface of said second filter layer.

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10. (Amended) An optical filter according to claim 2, wherein:

said second filter layer is composed of a material stronger than a strength of a material of said first filter layer; and
a size of the surface of said first filter layer is smaller than a size of the surface of said second filter layer.

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Please add the following claims 12-19:

--12. (New) An optical filter according to claim 2, wherein:

said first filter layer is an infrared-cutting filter and said second filter layer is a $\frac{1}{4}\lambda$ plate; and
a size of the surface of said first filter layer is smaller than a size of the surface of said second filter layer.

--13. (New) An optical device comprising:

a photoelectric converter that converts a subject image formed at a light-receiving surface thereof to an electric signal;

an optical system that forms the subject image with a light flux from a subject at the light-receiving surface of said photoelectric converter;

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an optical filter that is provided on an optical path between said photoelectric converter and said optical system to filter the light flux, the optical filter includes a plurality of filter layers that are laminated along a direction of an optical axis of the light flux that passes through the optical filter, the plurality of filter layers including at least a first filter layer and a second filter layer which are laminated with each other, a size of said first filter layer being smaller than a size of said second filter layer along at least one direction perpendicular to the optical axis so that a stepped portion is formed at least at a portion of an external circumference of the optical filter; and

a holding member that engages a portion of an external circumference of the second filter layer that extends in the direction perpendicular to the optical axis and is located in the stepped portion, so that the holding member holds the optical filter.--

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--14. (New) An optical device according to claim 13, wherein:

said holding member has a spring property and holds said optical filter by pressing said optical filter either toward said photoelectric converter or toward said optical system.--

--15. (New) An optical device according to claim 13, wherein said first filter layer is an infrared-cutting filter and said second filter layer is a $\frac{1}{4}\lambda$ plate.--

--16. (New) An optical device according to claim 13, wherein said holding member achieves positioning of said optical filter in a plane perpendicular to the optical axis.--

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--17. (New) An optical device according to claim 13, wherein said first filter layer is located at a side closer to the subject than said second filter layer.--

--18. (New) An optical device according to claim 13, wherein said first filter layer and said second filter layer are pasted to each other.--